Format of TA training

**Background & Goals**

**Problem:** The Department of Integrative Physiology (IPHY) was lacking a formal Teaching Assistant (TA) training for entering or continuing graduate students.

**Solution & Approval:** Following review of TA training posters from Chemistry, Geology, and Physics at the SEI Spring 2009 End of Term Event, we submitted a formal request to host IPHY TA training with an IPHY faculty member, Ruth Heisler. Our training would consist two 3.5 hour trainings (over 2 days), the week prior to the start of the fall semester. To ensure sustainability, an IPHY faculty member was involved in the development and leading of TA training sessions.

**TA Training Goals**
1. To eliminate any anxiety about teaching.
2. To integrate the six principles of learning that are promoted by the SEI (backwards design, expert vs. novice thinking, prior knowledge, active vs. passive learning, professionalism in the classroom, and metacognition).
3. To provide examples of activities that promote a more active learning environment.
4. To provide additional resources on effective pedagogical approaches supported by scientific data.
5. To offer guidance on how to teach with a high level of professionalism in the classroom.
6. To offer suggestions on what to do for the first day of class and provide a useful mix of fundamental "survival" information.

**Outcomes of 1st Annual IPHY TA Training**

**Top 3 training sessions as ranked by the TA's in a follow-up survey**
1. Expert vs. Novice
2. Active vs. Passive Learning
3. Professionalism

**Top 3 desired follow-up training sessions as requested by TA’s**
1. Effective Presentation Techniques
2. Active Learning Techniques
3. How People Learn

"Since I knew nothing and had no experience in teaching prior to the fall semester, I had no idea about how to teach a recitation without it seeming like a student presentation every week. The training showed me some ways to engage the students to ensure that they were actively learning throughout each session."

**Top 3 ideas incorporated by TA’s into their own classroom**
1. Using the Socratic method to ask students questions
2. Remembering the 7-bit rule
3. Using Backwards Design when designing activities

**Testimonials**

"I'm a newbie - beforehand, I had no idea how to go about TA'ing. 60% or more of info covered were things I likely would not have thought about."

"Maybe give specific examples of learning activities for each type of classroom the new TA’s will be in (recitation vs lab). How does a lab TA incorporate concept maps or strip sequences or clickers. Are there activities that are more suitable to a particular setting?"

"Gave me an idea of what to expect which was really nice for someone who has never taught. Good information on how we learn and how TAs can help utilize what is known about the learning process"